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SUBJECT: BULGARIA SUPPORTS U.S. APPROACH TO CORFU  
MINISTERIAL

REF: SECSTATE 59226

Classified By: Ambassador McElDowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Bulgaria agrees fully with the United States on the opportunities and pitfalls presented by the Corfu Ministerial. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly supports reftel points and took the unusually proactive step of presenting the Embassy with a formal position paper identifying the following priorities: the United States must be included in discussions on European security; existing organizations of European security are functioning well; discussions at the Ministerial should focus on how to improve the effectiveness of existing institutions and not on creating new ones; the OSCE remains the best forum for discussions of this nature. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On June 16, DCM Karagiannis urged MFA Political Director Poriyazov and Deputy Minister Churov to view the Corfu Ministerial as a chance to launch a constructive, open-ended dialogue on European security without a predetermined timeline or end-state. The Bulgarians agreed completely with this concept, saying they hoped to use the Ministerial mainly as an opportunity to engage Russia and to speak openly about ways to improve coordination between and inside existing security structures.

¶3. (SBU) The following June 17 paper lays out the official Bulgarian position on the Ministerial and the issue of European security architecture more broadly. (BEGIN TEXT OF PAPER)

-- Existing European security organizations are functioning effectively, and their operation should not be held back or compromised by President Medvedev's proposal for a new comprehensive treaty on European security. The discussions initiated by him should not undermine the existing architecture; on the contrary they should increase its effectiveness.

--To a large extent, the Russian proposals come not because Russia considers the current system ineffective, but as a result of Russia's inability to impose a veto on decisions taken by institutions in which it is not a member. Possibly, Russia is looking to block certain processes such as MDP and NATO enlargement. If that is true, then the aim is to restrict NATO's room to maneuver and make independent decisions.

-- The OSCE provides a good framework for discussions of the European security initiatives proposed by Presidents Medvedev and Sarkozy. The subject matter could also be discussed at the NATO-Russia Council.

-- We support the views expressed in the U.S. non-paper as well as the inclusion of the arms control subject matter in

the discussions.

-- It is necessary to analyze Russia's proposals in the context of the discussion of NATO's new Strategic Concept.

-- Throughout the discussions, it is necessary to keep the transatlantic link intact. Russia's original idea was that the main discussion of the new European security architecture should be between Russia and the EU. We believe that isolating the United States from this debate does not serve the interests of European security. Therefore it is necessary to reach an agreement on a transatlantic partnership level before the process of future talks is initiated.

-- The existing security mechanisms and organizations (NATO, EU, OSCE, CIS, CSTO, etc.) continue to play a major role in Euro-Atlantic security. Any change aimed at improving the European security architecture should be based on improving the cooperation of the existing structures.

-- Discussions should be based on OSCE's comprehensive approach to security which reflects not only OSCE's political-military dimension, but its human, economic and environmental aspects as well. From that perspective, OSCE would be the best platform for dialogue.

-- The main elements of the process should be:

1) Confirming the principles and documents adopted by the OSCE as a basis for cooperation in the field of European security;

2) Invigorating OSCE's political-military dimension and solving the crisis with the CFE treaty;

3) Improving OSCE's conflict prevention and conflict resolution capacity;

4) Using and developing OSCE's potential to address new challenges related to energy security, climate change, environmental security, etc.

-- We expect the informal ministerial meeting at Corfu will mark the beginning of a more specific and structured dialogue for the future of European security. (END TEXT OF PAPER)

(C) Comment: There is no great enthusiasm in Bulgaria for Medvedev's proposals, but they are willing to use the opportunity to discuss how existing structures, particularly the OSCE, could be improved. Speaking frankly, Political Director Poriyazov said that the Russians appeared to want to maintain all structures and assurances that are important to them, while changing or eliminating those important to NATO. He realizes the likelihood of the Ministerial or the ensuing discussions leading to a breakthrough with the Russians is very small, and he was clear that Bulgaria agrees with the U.S. approach. He also indicated a degree of sensitivity in Bulgaria over how to tell the Russians no. Without giving up any concessions, it is important to strike the proper tone, he said, and to ensure that Russia feels seriously engaged in an honest and open dialogue.

McEldowney